



## Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

*Comments on...*

### University District Stations

(NE 45<sup>th</sup> and Pacific Streets)

#### Scope Briefing

*From the March 24, 1999 meeting:*

- Before the baseline is finalized for these tunnel stations, it is very important to review and confirm data about where people are coming from and going to, in that this information should direct the location of entrances.
- The headhouses must be visible, but context is important in determining the actual design. There needs to be substantial coordination with the University of Washington on the NE 45<sup>th</sup> and Pacific stations; on Capitol Hill one of the issues is orientation— perpendicular or parallel to the street.
- All stakeholders in the University District should be informed and involved at the same time.
- The Panel believes the entrance location decisions are critical, and requests that ST come back when those decisions are made— even if that means a special briefing— in order to explain the locations, recommendations for each one, and information that supports the decisions.

*From the May 12, 1999 meeting:*

- Look at Option B (for NE 43<sup>rd</sup> station) again with the escalators oriented toward University Way, with egress in the r-o-w in a wider sidewalk while still keeping through traffic. This would get people under 15<sup>th</sup> and towards the Ave with the same number of footsteps.
- Explore adjusting the north sidewalk (for NE 43<sup>rd</sup> station) in order to create a clear sightline— thus providing visual access— from the Ave to the escalators.

*From the May 26, 1999 meeting:*

- The LRRP supports Option B (for NE 43<sup>rd</sup> station) for several reasons— because it provides access to the west side of 15th Avenue and because there is no other compelling design to justify closing all or a portion of 43rd as described in several of the other options.
- Sound Transit should further explore siting a station entrance in the right-of-way on the north side of 43rd in order to obtain clear sight lines and thus a stronger connection to the entrance from University Way.
- The LRRP recommends a dialogue with the University of Washington via its Architectural Review Panel or other campus design/planning entities

regarding coordination of capital projects such as the Law School and Burke Museum. The results of that discussion(s) should be brought back to the LRRP, or opportunities explored to bring that discussion to a LRRP meeting with relevant University personnel attending.

### **Summary of Issues Raised in LRRP Scope Briefing Progress Report (July 1999):**

- Identity for both stations, collectively and individually
- Creating functional and aesthetic station entrances in context of congested intersections (45<sup>th</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>)
- Visual/physical connections for pedestrians/bikes between station and campus, stations and business district
- Ensuring good bus connections
- Minimizing impacts to business district during construction
- Additional coordination with UW on siting of station entrances, connection to Law School and Burke Museum, bicycle facilities, campus pedestrian paths
- Potential joint development with U Book Store
- Connections to Burke-Gilman Trail, waterfront at Pacific station

### **Concept Design**

*The Panel was briefed on August 25, 1999, but made no formal recommendations; key comments included:*

- Continue to explore the idea of a bike facility at Pacific.
- Concern regarding having entrances on just one side of the street—especially on 15<sup>th</sup> where the eastern edge is so devoid of activity
- A key issue here is character of the street; need to seriously address this as a pedestrian-oriented street
- What are the 20-year implications of this design; what kind of development might we see on 15<sup>th</sup> in 20 years?
- Continued concern about coordinating effectively with the Law School and Burke Museum developments
- Cover from weather is an important issue
- How will the community be involved in further developing the design concepts of "perch, nest, and beacon?"
- Emphasize the east/west connection and how to better integrate the U.W. with the business district—the edges of the stations/nodes should link up the pedestrian environment North-South by relating to each other; the stations should not just be separate "holes in the wall."

### **Summary of Issues Raised in LRRP Concept Design Progress Report (December 1999):**

- Northgate, rather than the University District, is the Panel's preferred terminus to the system in Phase I because of its better bus-rail connections, the existing traffic congestion in the District, and the ability to reduce the number of buses downtown thus relieving downtown congestion.
- Although the Panel initially supported a mezzanine at NE 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, it has no qualms about deferring or deleting the mezzanine as long as other pedestrian improvements are made at the surface to 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue at this intersection as well as the NE 45<sup>th</sup> intersection.
- Making a "town and gown" connection is critical to the community, but also to Link. This includes bus-rail connections and pedestrian access 15<sup>th</sup> at various points. The Panel also believes it is important for Sound Transit to work with the City and the University of Washington on design

standards for 15<sup>th</sup> to become a pedestrian-friendly corridor along its entire length.

- Sound Transit should actively engage a variety of people and organizations as partners in developing Phase I of Link; including— in the University District— the University of Washington, Burke Museum, and local business and property owner organizations
- Sound Transit should pursue joint development partnerships with the U.W. and/or a private or non-profit organization to develop a bicycle facility at Pacific Street Station, serving as a regional model for integrating cycling with public transportation
- The "seam" between the University and the Ave should be wider than 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, with the town and gown connections extending along east/west streets between the Ave (University Way) and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE; rethink the "zipper" analogy to reflect this broader approach
- Explore perch, nest, beacon, and garden path analogies further
- The art concepts for these stations are not as compelling as for other stations in the system; further explore how best to express the essence of the University District drawing on key ideas of learning, change, and diverse population

## Schematic Design

*The Panel was briefed on March 1, 2000, and made the following recommendation:.*

The Panel recommended approval of the schematic designs as presented for the NE 45<sup>th</sup> and Pacific Street Stations, and complimented the consultants on the clean, elegant design of the two pairs of headhouses, including the incorporation of drainage as a water feature at NE 45<sup>th</sup>; the inclusion of a bicycle facility at Pacific; and the attention paid to subterranean spaces.

The Panel is nonetheless wrestling with the extent to which the design of station entrances, the surrounding site improvements, and improvements within the station successfully achieve the LRRP's design principle to "fit within the... context of the surrounding neighborhood, affirming local characteristics...". The Panel recognizes the challenge of reflecting such a diverse context in station architecture, but requests further examination and development of design ideas in the following areas:

- **Further development of station designs and related site improvements to affirm the local context:** While the University appears to be well-expressed in the station designs, there is not a corresponding relationship to the character and identity of the University District including the "Ave" merchants and culture, surrounding residential neighborhood, and other institutional uses.
- **Further evaluation of the art and architecture program at the station platforms:** Although the concept for vaulted chambers relate well to the University in both the formal (at 45th and 43rd), and abstract (at Pacific/life sciences), the "vitrine" concept of showcasing precious objects needs additional consideration; e.g. what objects would be showcased; are the objects intended to serve as a rotating exhibit; is

there a relationship between the objects and the Burke Museum and/or Henry Gallery, and if so how might the objects be curated; and lastly, how else might the art program be expressed and draw inspiration from its context.

- **Further exploration of formal partnerships with the Burke, Henry, and other cultural and neighborhood institutions is recommended:** In the event that participation by or partnership with such institutions is not be feasible or cost effective in terms of displaying collections of precious materials, a less involved approach (such as display cases for posters, enamel panels with historical notices, handbills, or posters, and bronze inlays) may still be worthy of exploration.
- **Continued coordination with the City, University, and community on street improvements for 15th Avenue NE, NE 43rd Street, and other streets as deemed appropriate:** The Panel applauds the joint discussions that have taken place to date, and supports coordinating capital projects in order to obtain the greatest public benefit possible with existing funds in addition to the opportunity to create a seamless and integrated design.
- **Further development of the detailing and programming for station plazas, with special attention to the needs of cyclists and connections to the surrounding community:** The Panel notes that this appears to be well-handled at the NE 45<sup>th</sup> station, but needs more attention at Pacific.

### **Schematic Design for the Pacific Street Station North Entrance**

*The Panel was briefed on June 7, 2000, and made the following recommendation:.*

The Panel thanks the consultants for clear and illustrative graphics with which to review the design alternatives, and the candor with which the alternatives were presented for the Panel's response. The Panel expresses support for the north-facing station entrance design on the Gould Hall expansion site, and requests further work on the following elements as design progresses:

- Encourage the University of Washington to consider realigning its proposed pedestrian path running east/west from campus across 15th Avenue in a straight line;
- Coordinate with the University on development of a bike center to meet the high bicycle use expected at this station;
- Activate the "lantern" wall to create a stronger relationship with the pedestrian path (perhaps nudging the wall slightly into the path); and
- More exploration of what it means to create a "green street" at this location.

### **Summary of Issues Raised in LRRP Schematic Design Progress Report:**

*Not yet completed.*

#### **Design Development**

*No briefing scheduled yet.*

#### **Construction Documents**

*No briefing scheduled yet.*